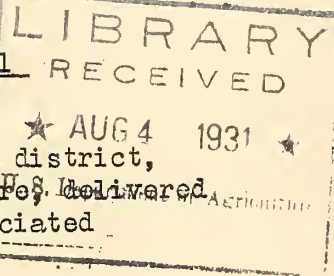


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2732 Ray A radio talk by W. W. Vincent, chief of the western district, Food and Drug Administration, U. S. Department of Agriculture, delivered July 30, 1931, through Station KGO, San Francisco, and associated National Broadcasting Company stations.

MR. LAMB: We bring to you again this afternoon, W.W. Vincent, Chief of the Western District of the Department's Food and Drug Administration, in his 51st discussion of better label reading. Mr. Vincent has previously stated that careful label-reading is merely insurance against being deceived and disappointed. His subject is to be "Tricky Labels," and I believe that should call for an interesting story or two--how about it, Mr. Vincent?

MR. VINCENT: Well, I have a story. Not exactly on my subject, but dealing with tricky labels.

MR. LAMB: A tricky story, eh? What's the product involved?

MR. VINCENT: Extracts and the syrups made from them. Instead of a grape beverage the public was getting an imitation product. About the only grape in the product was to be found in the name of the article. That was "Jungle Grape Concord Flavor."

MR. LAMB: And did it have the "Concord Flavor?"

MR. VINCENT: No. Such flavor as it had was primarily due to a coal-tar product, methyl anthranilate,--- a substance frequently used in imitation grape products.

My story deals with one firm's activities when it was a comparatively new concern. I shall start from the end of the story-- two seizures in Portland, Oregon, of a considerable quantity of a grape concentrate. These seizures were instigated by the activities of your food and drug agents. The material was labeled, in part, "Concentrated Jungle Grape-Concord Flavor Manufactured by Jungle Grape Products Co. Certified Food Coloring***** Directions for making Jungle Grape Syrup." Previously your food and drug inspector had sampled the material and a Government analyst had reported it to be a hydro-alcoholic solution of tartaric acid, containing artificial esters, coloring materials and little or no grape juice. There was present a material quantity of methyl anthranilate. And did they have it colored? There were two coal-tar dyes present: Amaranth, and one called Light Green SF Yellowish. The vegetable color, Cudbear, was also present. Now, this article was supposed to be a concentrated grape flavor because the directions specified that but two ounces of the concentrate were to be added to each quart of simple syrup and, of course, the bottler uses only about one ounce of the simple syrup in preparing the 6 ounce bottle of soda pop or soda water as served at the fountain. In addition, the product was short measure. It was a pretty expensive article. They charged your food and drug inspector \$4.00 a quart for this concoction.

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Folks, the manufacturer did not contest the seizure actions. Federal Notices of Judgment tell you that in one instance the manufacturer let the goods go by default and the court ordered their destruction by the U.S. Marshal. In the other instance the manufacturer did appear. He admitted the Government's allegations and the court released the material to him under bond for relabeling to the satisfaction of your food and drug agents. The label the Government approved read somewhat different from the first one used. It read in part: "Concentrated Jungle Imitation Grape Prepared from Grape Wine Artificial Flavor and Color with Added Fruit Acid." No one buying such a product and taking the time to think about that label would believe that he was getting essentially a grape-juice product. The words, "Jungle Imitation Grape," were the largest appearing upon the label.

So you see, the food and drugs act is far-reaching. It enables you to get what you want if you will read the label. It enables manufacturers to know what they are getting and it forces those who are unscrupulous to tell the truth upon their products.

MR. LAMB: Well, Mr. Vincent, apparently tricky labels go with tricky people,

MR. VINCENT: It seems so. But that's not exactly the kind of trick that I intended to speak about. You see, now, food buyers should be expert label readers. One can be misled by careless reading of a label technically correct.

The Federal food and drugs act demands upon the label of all packaged foods a statement of net contents. Such other statements as appear upon the package labels must be true to fact, otherwise the product is misbranded under the law. Perhaps it is unfortunate, but the law does not go so far as to require fully informative labels. Labels must be truthful, but the law does not insist that they carry all the information an inquisitive housewife might be expected to seek. The omissions of which I speak-- and this is general on canned fruits and vegetables-- are the declarations as to quality, variety and condition of contents. Housewives could get that information placed on labels if they would be more exacting in their demands and buy only brands of which they know the grade, or only material upon which grade and variety declarations are made. Be suspicious of coined names sounding of the genuine and whose spelling is a play upon the genuine. "Vanilllex" will not be a true vanilla extract; "Mapilllex" will not be a true maple extract; nor will "Cherriola" be a pure cherry juice. Nine times out of 10, products labeled comparable with the illustrations given will be imitation products artificially colored and flavored with synthetic flavors. The law requires the labels of such products to show that they are imitations. Scrutinize the label and you will not be misled into buying one of these articles in the mistaken belief that it is a natural flavor.

Brand names may be misleading if carelessly read without reference to other informative matter carried by the label. Some of the following, in my opinion, were conceived with intent to deceive the careless, the ignorant and the too-trusting buyer:

"Tiny Teddy Brand" appeared on canned string beans which were not

nearly so immature as the word "Tiny" might imply. The words, "Red Rambler," "Red Iris," and "Red Duck" have appeared on cans of salmon which yielded, upon examination, Pink Salmon and Coho salmon-- species usually selling for less money than Red Salmon. The phrase "All White Meat" appeared upon the label of a product packed by a nationally known distributor of tuna. The conventional picture of the fish bore the word, "Donita," if the careful reader chose to see it. You will need to be a careful label reader if you are going to receive tuna. Many labels of "Asparagus Soup: Cut," that product generally containing about one tip to two butt pieces, bear vignettes portraying luscious bunches of whole asparagus or neat bunches of tips. The words, "Soup Cuts," or "Center Cut Asparagus," must not be overlooked, however.

Another trick of labeling-- and this has been quite general --- is to portray upon labels of products, originally produced in Foreign countries but now produced here in volume, pictures of foreign places known to every one, with perhaps the label done in foreign colors and bearing foreign flags. Macaroni, olive oil, tonno, and tomato paste have been deceptively labeled in this respect. On packaged oils, the term, "Olio Puro," does not signify olive oil, even though the label design might imply it to be such. A number of such labels have been encountered where qualifying statements appear in places that are not prominent, and here you find the product is "Pure Olive Oil blended with high quality vegetable oils," or else it may be "Pure Vegetable oil," either peanut, corn or cottonseed, and merely "flavored with olive oil." Innumerable legal actions have been directed against labels of this character.

A product labeled as "Korean Crab," with the statement, "From the frigid deep blue waters of the North," and perhaps portraying a Japanese fishing scene, is not the canned Japanese crab with which you are all familiar. The term "Korean Crab" represents a distinct species which is generally considered inferior.

Some firms or corporations include the name of a State in the firm or company name, or show upon their labels the location of only their home office. Since these large companies often pack their material in a number of states, you can not be certain of locality where produced unless the label actually tells you.

Another trick of labeling is to add a word to a product name, thereby giving an unwarranted significance to the name. "Pineapple Hearts" has appeared upon pineapple cores, and certainly cores are not the superior product which the term "Pineapple Hearts" might imply.

Always look for the net-contents statement. Remember, that is one thing made mandatory by the food and drugs act. If the statement is in very small type or otherwise inconspicuously placed upon the label, look twice and then think a moment. What are you paying per pound?

Folks, I could go on, but my time is up. Have I told you sufficient to impress upon you that as the buyer you still must sometimes beware? Remember, now, the practices illustrated represent the practices of the minority. They are largely confined to the unethical manufacturer-- who is

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in the minority. The great majority of food manufacturers are proud of their products-- proud of their labels. And the Food and Drug Administration is whittling away at these occasional tricky labels. I have urged you to read labels, study them, become a discriminating buyer; then you help not only yourself but the honest manufacturer as well. If you will do that, the Food and Drug Administration will not have labored in vain and W. W. Vincent will be gratified if he has contributed to your benefit.

MR. LAMB: Folks, that concludes W.W. Vincent's 51st talk of his Read-the-Label series. Do you want this information on tricky labels-- the information on mushrooms, so-called "health foods," vitamins, dentifrices, fishery products, cathartics, dried fruits, and many other subjects he has covered? All you need do is drop a postcard to W. W. Vincent, care of the station to which you are listening, or to the U.S. Food and Drug Laboratory, San Francisco. Some of the women's clubs, universities, public schools, food manufacturers, brokers, are on his mailing list. As the actual buyer, shouldn't your name be there?
